Rhyncholaelia (Lindl.) Schltr. 1918

[rink-oh-LAY-lee-ah]

Information obtained from the American Orchdi Society, “To be or not to be Rhyncholaelia, that is the question.” For more than 70 years, the question has been: What is the correct generic name for this plant and for other species like it? Is it Rhyncholaelia, Laelia or Brassavola? In 1918, Rudolph Schlechter recognized that two species of spectacular flowering plants were sufficiently different taxonomically from Cattleya, Laelia and Brassavola to be placed in a separate genus. He coined the generic name Rhyncholaelia from the Greek word rhynchos (snout) and the genus name Laelia, undoubtedly a reference to the seed capsule, which Schlechter considered a main point in his generic separation. Although still debated by taxonomists, Rhyncholaelia is considered by most as the proper generic name. From a horticulturist’s standpoint, however, Brassavola probably will continue to be used as the generic name to be consistent with the thousands of hybrids already recorded, that is until those names are changed.

Vegetatively, these sympodial epiphytes are quite easy to distinguish from their close relatives. They have club-shaped to spindle-shaped pseudobulbs that often are hidden by very glaucous, almost white sheaths. Each pseudobulb is topped by a single stiff, leathery, gray-green, glaucous leaf that is usually elliptic and up to 8 inches (20 cm) long. Each growth bears a single flower subtended by an exceptionally large, leafy sheath.

The basic flower colors are light green to creamy white, with an occasional flower displaying a pale lavender-pink tint. The throats of the flowers range from emerald green in color to having a large rose-colored spot. The flowers which can be up to 7 inches (17.5 cm) in diameter are similar as far as their sepals and petals are concerned, usually being alike in size, shape and color, with the segments of Rhyncholaelia glauca a little more reflexed. The lips, however, are so distinctly different that these two species can be separated easily without question. Rhyncholaelia digbyana has an extremely large, slightly three-lobed lip, which has a very deeply fringed margin, whereas R. glauca has a broad, blunt, fringeless lip

Native to:

Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize

The World Checklist of Selected Plants recognize two accepted names (2/2020).

Rhyncholaelia Species Awards

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | FCC | AM | HCC | AQ | JC | CCM | CCE | CHM | CBM | CBR | TOTAL |
| *digbyana* | 1 | 22 | 10 | - | 1 | 9 | 1 | - | - | - | 44 |
| *glauca* | 1 | 13 | 15 | - | 1 | 15 | - | - | 1 | - | 46 |

Rhyncholaelia Species Offspring and Progeny

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre - 1930 | 1930  -  1940 | 1940  -  1950 | 1950  -  1960 | 1960  -  1970 | 1970  -  1980 | 1980  -  1990 | 1990  -  2000 | 2000  -  2010 | 2010  + | Total | Progeny |
| ***digbyana\**** | 92 | 10 | 21 | 19 | 32 | 31 | 72 | 35 | 49 | 59 | 419 | 19,344 |
| *glauca* | 19 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 24 | 14 | 13 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 144 | 1,248 |

When taking into consideration which of the two Rhyncholaelia species is a building block for the genus, I review both the number of American Orchid Society awards received by the species in the genus in addition to the number of awarded offspring and the number of progeny. Rhyncholaelia *glauca* has a total of forty-six clones awarded by the American Orchid Society, Rhyncholaelia *digbyana* has a total of forty-four clones awarded by the American Orchid Society. When comparing the number of progeny and the number of generations of progeny, it is apparent Rhyncholaelia digbyana is the building block for Rhyncholaelia species.

Rhyncholaelia *digbyana* Awards

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Thirteen Generations of Progeny | | | | |
| G. | Grexes | Awdd. | % Awdd. | Awds |
| 1 | 419 | 56 | 13.4% | 169 |
| 2 | 1,041 | 77 | 7.4% | 179 |
| 3 | 1,360 | 139 | 10.2% | 389 |
| 4 | 2,509 | 249 | 9.9% | 688 |
| 5 | 3,756 | 502 | 13.4% | 1,295 |
| 6 | 4,315 | 526 | 12.2% | 1,253 |
| 7 | 3,509 | 421 | 12.0% | 1,034 |
| 8 | 1,707 | 230 | 13.5% | 503 |
| 9 | 488 | 41 | 8.4% | 101 |
| 10 | 163 | 26 | 16.0% | 106 |
| 11 | 39 | 10 | 25.6% | 28 |
| 12 | 37 | 3 | 801% | 4 |
| 13 | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 |

Rhyncholaelia *glauca*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Eight Generations of Progeny | | | | |
| G. | Grexes | Awdd. | % Awdd. | Awds |
| 1 | 122 | 18 | 14.8% | 47 |
| 2 | 125 | 11 | 8.8% | 21 |
| 3 | 187 | 48 | 25.7% | 179 |
| 4 | 310 | 45 | 14.5% | 107 |
| 5 | 254 | 48 | 18.9% | 144 |
| 6 | 215 | 24 | 11.2% | 49 |
| 7 | 34 | 1 | 2.9% | 1 |
| 8 | 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 |

**References**

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